

## [A Spanish Stonecutter's Widow]

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### A SPANISH STONECUTTER'S WIDOW

She was a large, swarthy-faced woman. Her black hair was drawn to a heavy, shiny coil low on her neck. Her fingers were red, pricked from years of fine hand sewing. Today she was crocheting an edge on a linen tablecloth. Conversation was no hindrance to her work. Fingers flow, dark eyes flashed as she spoke of those early years when she and her stonecutter-husband lived in this same apartment.

The small, square living-room held three oak chairs, a davenport mediocre in design and quality, an oblong oak stand, and a sewing machine set close to the one window where it would catch the last light of the afternoon sun. The room's accessories were a marvel of patient hand work. A scalloped crocheted band edged the white net curtains. The worn spots on the davenport, - the back rests and the arms, were hidden by linen runners of delicately designed drawnwork.

"I have crocheted for so long now that I can make patterns to suit myself." Mrs. Viales held her work up for inspection. "No, not this one. No, this one I am mak' for a woman who lives on Barclay Hill. She show' me the pattern from a book an' she say, 'go ahead an' make this one. I will pay you what you think is a fair price.' She pays good. I have done work for her for twenty years. In the first years, three I think, that my husband was cut' [???] 2 stone he work for her husband. I used to help her clean house once a week.

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My husband found work in another shed nearer this house an' for tho same pay, so he took it. But after my husband died, this lady did not forget me. I used to take my crocheted work from house to house trying to sell it. She bought some.

"She was good to me. I had three children. She said it was too hard for me to go from house to house. Sometimes I would have to take the youngest baby with me. Besides she said I would make more money if I stayed home, an' if people wanted some crocheted work done they would come an' order it. She said people are will' to pay more when they can say, 'look, it is this pattern I want, make it jus' like this.' She spoke the truth. I have done well enough to raise the three children. The two girls are married. The boy is work' in the woods in Bakersfield.

"Me, I have been in America 27 years the August. Me an' my husband, we were both born in [Biesca?], Spain. It is on the [?] River. That is a pretty river for you. Near our town the river is narrow an' deep. It flows fast past sharp rocks that are a little like granite, but not good enough to work. You see in them big streaks of yellow, red, and orange. At a distance they look pretty. But when you get close you can see that they are dirty from the years that water has run over them. All summer lone small blue flowers grow between the rocks. I have never soon anything like them in America. They are shape' like daisies an' very, very blue, but in the 3 center where the daisies are yellow, these are pure white.

"We lived jus' a three hours' carriage ride from Saragossa. That in where my husband learn' the granite cutting. It is a large city with many beautiful buildings, it would make ten or twelve of Barre. We were married sixteen months when we decide to come to America. Yes, straight to Barre. There was another stonecutter an' his wife from our town who come with us. We took the train to Bilao, an' from there tho boat. No, no, I did not like that boat an' I did not like the trip. I was use' to ride only in a wagon or carriage, an' that boat it make me sick all the time. I was carry' my first baby then. She was born four months after we got to Barre. All that trip I was sick enough to die. I want' to be alone, but even that I could not

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have. The stonecutter an' his wife from our town share' our room, an' besides them there are two other couples. I never again want to travel that way.

"I was too sick to bother to look at New York. My husband use' to say it was a lot like Saragossa. But, well, he was so busy to take care of me that he didn't see much himself. Besides, he was always say' that when you look quick an' short at big cities they all look the same. We found a room with a Spanish family. We stayed there three weeks. For two weeks I was abed all the time. Afterwards we picked out these rooms. I've lived here ever since.

"My husband was a good artist, more for pictures than for cut' stone, I think. Back in Spain there is a picture 4 of our pretty river that he painted, an' a good picture of his school teacher. When we left Spain both of them were hang' in the school house. Many times I have wish' that he kept at his paint' instead of stonecut'.

"He use' to earn extra money in the sheds. When a customer was not satisfy' with the designs the boss would show, then he would ask my husband to draw some special ones at home at night. Many times he did this an' the boss was very please' with him.

"When my first baby was born he drew a picture of a beautiful bedspread. It was all in roses, a chain of roses. Together we figure' out how many an' what kind of stitches I would have to make to crochet it. I made it small for the baby's bed. Everybody who saw it liked it very much. My first girl was married five years ago. For a present I made her a big spread, just like the first one. But before I start' it I have to sit down an' figure stitches all over again. I have kept that picture, I have put it away with pictures he made of the three children.

"No, he did not die from stonecutters' T. B. He died from pneumonia at the time of the influenza. But the doctor said that if his lungs were not already touch' with dust, maybe he would have got well. It was hard for me to get along after he died. But I have already tol' you about the woman on the Hill who bought my crocheted worked. She help' me to get a

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lot of customers. I do dressmaking an' plain sewing, too. 5 "I learned to crochet in the old country. There was a convent of white nuns just outside of [Biesca?]. Every Saturday they would give lessons free to anybody who wanted to go. Sewing, crocheting, linen work. The work they did was the best I have ever seen. The linens were sent to the cathedrals in the big cities. Altar linens they were. I always say it is very lucky for me that I learn' to do this work. How else then could I support myself an' three children, except that I scrub floors an' do hard work all the time?

"Yes, I have people left in Spain. I think I have. I have not heard now for two, three years. The people of my husband, they stop' from writing jus' as soon as he died, so them I do not count. My own father an' mother are a lone time dead. There is only a brother over there, an' I do not know if he is dead or alive. I do not hear from the letters I wrote, I do not get them back, I do not know what to think. He had two children, grown up now. I do not hear from them either. I think that country has gone very crazy with war an' power. I am glad to be safe right here.

"No, I do not want to go back ever. An' why should I? There is nothing there for me. As long as I have my eyes an' my hands I can earn enough money here to pay my rent an' live pretty good —"